

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

5 1. A method for puncturing a proximal membrane without puncturing a distal membrane comprising:

10 distally advancing an elongated body through a first elongated tubular member to a first position where a distal end of the elongated body is in a first configuration outside a distal end of the first elongated tubular member, the elongated body having a distal tip that is sufficiently rigid and sharp to puncture the proximal membrane;

puncturing the proximal membrane with the distal tip of the elongated body; and

15 advancing the elongated body distally through the punctured proximal membrane whereby the distal tip of the elongated body moves into a second configuration having a blunt distal surface facing the distal membrane.

20 2. A method according to claim 1 further comprising encasing the first elongated tubular member within a second tubular member.

3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the first elongated tubular member is a dilator.

25 4. A method according to claim 1 wherein the elongated body is an elongated wire.

5. A method according to claim 1 wherein the elongated body is an elongated tubular member.

30 6. A method according to claim 1 wherein the elongated body comprises nitinol.

7. A method according to claim 1 wherein the first membrane is the atrial septum and the second, distal membrane is the left atrial wall.

35 8. A method according to claim 5 wherein the distal tip of the elongated body is cut such that the distal tip of the elongated body becomes floppy.

9. A method according to claim 8 wherein the cut is a spiral cut.

10. A method according to claim 8 wherein the cut is a box cut.

5 11. A method according to claim 1 wherein the distal tip of the
elongated body is generally straight.

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